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No. 5 Hamilton Place, Boston, Massachusetts

Her Uncle's Boots

A Farce in One Act

For Female Characters Only

By
MRS. MYRTLE BARBER CARPENTER

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.
1910

P5635
.Z9C233

Her Uncle's Boots

CHARACTERS

Miss Izabelle, *preceptress at a Girls' School.*
Anne Dyer
Elizabeth Winter
Kittens Carlisle } *pupils at the school.*
Loraine Bassett
Jule Pomeroy
Nell Oldfield, *a girl visiting at the school.*

COSTUMES

The girls should, with the exception of Jule, be rather well dressed; she should wear a shabby looking dress, made very plainly. Miss Izabelle should be stylishly dressed.

PROPERTIES

Any ordinary furnishings for a sitting-room. A large dry-goods box, a fancy dress with a torn ruffle, a picture hat, some books tied together, a pair of fancy boots, a collection of cheap jewelry to be used in bribing the burglar, and a knife, chafing-dish spoon, a revolver, a call bell, stove poker and umbrella to be used in frightening him.

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Her Uncle's Boots

SCENE.—*Any ordinary sitting-room. A table toward the front with a chair near it. A door leading to the right, toward the front, and another at the rear. A dry-goods box should be placed at the left side and piles of clothing, books, etc., should be lying about.*

Enter JULE POMEROY, *carrying a feather duster in one hand and a pair of men's boots in the other. Puts down the boots and begins to dust; heaves a sigh and pauses.*

JULE. Oh, dear! I guess I'm tired of playing poor girl. (*Drops into a chair and pushes back her hair.*) It isn't any joke working for one's board, it's work—work—work from morning till night! (*Pause.*) Just think, I haven't had a whole pound of chocolates since I came here last fall, and only two ice-cream sodas, and those I was treated to. I wonder what made me such a goose! The idea of going off to a fashionable boarding-school and working for my board, when Dad's worth a half a million. Had to, though, to prove to Uncle Max that all girls aren't snobs! I can stand most of it, but I do hate to give these away. (*Goes over and picks up the boots and places them on the table.*) My uncle's boots! Positively it's the only thing I have here that I can spare, and Miss Izabelle said she wanted each girl to contribute something to that Old Folks' Home, and she would be glad if we sacrificed something in what we gave. Guess I do, all right, and I don't know if the boots will fit any of those old men she told us about or not. Oh, dear! I wonder if the others have brought much; looks like it by the size of the piles. Well, I suppose I'd better leave them and get back to my room, or Nell Oldfield will see me and recognize me. Who ever dreamed that I'd see anybody here that I'd ever known before. My! but I would like to have a good visit with her! She was all right when she was out on the ranch that summer. Well, she mustn't see me or she'll give the whole thing away. (*Starts to leave the room*

at the rear; springs back.) Horrors! There she is now! Perhaps she doesn't see me. (*Looks wildly around.*) There's no place to hide but Miss Izabelle's room, and I don't dare go in there.

Enter NELL OLDFIELD.

NELL. Jule! Jule! Jule Pomeroy! What are you dodging me for? Where have you been ever since I came?

(JULE *comes forward reluctantly.*)

JULE. Hush, Nell. Sh!

(*Looks around apprehensively as* NELL *comes forward and throws her arms around her.*)

NELL. Oh, what is it? What is it? Nobody ever told me you were here.. I just found your name in the catalogue when when I was up in Kittens' room waiting for the crowd to get back from class. I was just starting out to find out about it, and I saw you dodging back in here. What is it? Didn't you want to see me?

JULE. Want to see you? Well, I should say I did! But can you keep a secret, Nell?

NELL. Sure, if you want me to; but what on earth is the matter? Why are you togged out in that cheap dress? Your father hasn't lost all his money, has he? (*Watches* JULE *as she picks up the boots.*) And what are you doing with men's boots here? And why haven't you written to me? And ——

JULE (*laughing*). One at a time, Nell, please. It'll be a positive relief to tell you, only give me time.

NELL. Well?

JULE. And you won't tell, honest?

NELL. Cross my heart—I hope to die.

JULE. All right, then. You remember my Uncle Max?

NELL. Oh, the college professor who was out on the ranch that summer I was there? Looked awful sick, and you said it was because the girl he was to have married had married somebody who had more money? Oh, yes, I remember him. But what has that got to do with you being here?

JULE. Wait a bit and you'll see. You know mother died the winter after you were there, and father was afraid that I was getting too wild and woolly or something; said I knew more about driving bronchos than I did about playing the piano,

and so he packed me off to stay with Uncle Max and his sisters a spell. Well, I just dote on Uncle Max, and I guess he likes me kind of, but he just hates women generally, says they're snobs and I don't know what all.

NELL. I know he was that way that summer, but what has that got to do with you being here?

JULE. Well, I'm coming to that! I was reading in the library one day, curled up behind the curtain on the big window-seat, when Uncle Max and Professor Eastman came in. They were talking about girls' education. Uncle Max said that the present system was all wrong. He said that if a girl went off to school and had plenty of money and a lot of noted relatives she'd never have any trouble gaining friends, and a lot more like that. Said she'd have a sort of pull, you know, and everything would be smooth sailing. Well, Professor Eastman said it wasn't so; and just because one girl had treated him shabbily was no reason for judging that the whole class were crooked. He said that true womanhood was valued wherever you found it, whether clad in silk or calico, and a whole lot more along that string about "fine feathers not making fine birds." Sounded just like a book! And Uncle Max walked up and down the room and he said he believed if he could find anybody who cared more for brains than they did for gold he'd be glad. He said he believed his faith in womankind would be restored if a rich girl would forget her money for a while. Said he wished he could send me off where folks would know me for what I really was and not because my father was rich and my mother a Bostonian blue blood. And just then I jumped out from behind the curtain and yelled, "I'll do it, Uncle Max, I'll do it." Both the men jumped awfully, and then Uncle Max said all sort of solemn, "What'll you do, little girl?" And I said, "I'll go off to a fashionable girls' school as a poor girl, and I'll never tell a soul that Daddy's rich nor that I have a noted relative unless it will do somebody some good, and ——"

NELL. And you really did it! How grand! But what have the boots got to do with it?

JULE. Well, you see that day Professor Eastman was greatly pleased, and he just shouted out "Bravo!" when I got through, and then he turned to Uncle Max and said, "You'd better give her your *hero boots*, Max. Any girl that is willing to pass through what she'll have to, if she does what she says she'll do, is as much of a hero as you were the night you carried

Claire Gray out of Old South during the fire." And Uncle Max gave them to me.

NELL. But what are you doing with them here?

JULE. Giving them away to an Old Folks' Home.

NELL. Are you crazy?

JULE. No, but honestly it's the only thing I've got that I can spare, and Miss Izabelle was so anxious that each girl donate something.

NELL. Why don't you send home for something?

JULE. The poor girl couldn't, and so I'm not going to, but it's just like pulling teeth to part with them.

NELL. Well, I'd never do it! (*Pauses.*) You ought to write up your experiences for some magazine, Jule. Call it "A Poor Girl's Experiences In a Fashionable Boarding-School," or something like that.

JULE. Hadn't thought about it. Guess I will! (*Gong sounds.*) Mercy! there is the gong and we mustn't be seen together. Don't let on that you've ever seen me.

(*Both make hasty exit.* JULE *thrusts boots into bottom of box as she leaves.*)

Enter MISS IZABELLE.

MISS I. Well, I suppose it is my duty to look over and sort out this material and see what is really fit to send to the Old Folks' Home. I wonder what there is? (*Begins to examine the contents of the box.*) I told the girls to make some sacrifice if they really wanted to enjoy giving. (*Pulls out a bundle of books.*) Books, hardly soiled; those must be from Elizabeth. She has always been such a treasure in the school that I really hate to think of her graduating. The bundle of shirt-waists (*holding them up*) must be Anne's, dear, sensible Anne. A party dress with a torn ruffle and a note pinned on. Wonder what it says? (*Reads.*) "Dear whoever gets me: Miss Izabelle wants us to give you something that it's hard to part with, 'cause she says we enjoy it more, so I'm sending you my very prettiest party dress; Loraine says that old ladies won't have any use for a silk party gown, but my grandmother likes pretty things, and I believe you will. P. S. The ruffle is torn, so I'm going to give you the picture hat that goes with it. With lots of love, Katherine King Carlisle." (MISS I. *smiles.*) Katherine, I wonder if she will ever grow up to her name or always be just dear little lovable Kittens. The worsted slippers

are Loraine's, I suppose, but what in the world are these? (*Holds up the boots.*) A pair of men's fancy dress boots! Why, where did they come from? Why, they look like the identical ones that Max wore the night that he saved my life back there in dear Old South Hall. He was so brave and calm and cool. He picked me up and carried me out as though I did not weigh anything at all. And the fire was all around us. It was a costume party, and he was wearing those funny boots and had a military cloak over one shoulder, and he threw that over my face so that nothing could hurt my face, and ran out over the burning timbers. I almost wish I had died then! When we got out he was nearly suffocated, and some one tore off his coat and another grabbed his boots. It was Ted Eastman, and he put them up on a dry-goods box and made a little speech and called them the hero's boots. And then one of the girls, I remember, took out her fountain-pen and wrote "Hero's Boots" on one side. (*Examines the boots and gives a little cry.*) Why, they are his boots! Why, where did they come from? Who could have put them in here? It couldn't have been for a joke on me, for nobody knows that I am Claire Gray. Oh, how could Max treat me so? Whatever made him go off in that way? He might have known I was only teasing. No sensible girl would ever think of throwing him over for that old Bailey, even if he was a millionaire. I couldn't help his hanging around me when he was such a great friend of Aunt Mildred's. Max must have known I cared only for him. (*Begins to cry; hears some one coming; springs to her feet from where she had been kneeling beside the box.*) Oh, oh, I must not be found here. And I can't give up those boots.

(*Thrusts them just inside the front doorway and makes a hasty exit as steps are heard approaching.*)

Enter KITTENS CARLISLE; *she sinks into a chair by the table.*

KIT. Oh, dear! I wish I was bright. I hate always to be the know-nothing in the school. And now that Nell Oldfield has come, I can't study in my room at all. Have to trapes off down here. Guess the girls think that my grades are so bad that there's no use in trying to help me out by giving me a chance to study. You know I think the younger sister of a real smart person is really to be pitied. The teachers always expect you to be as smart as your older sister was, and you're not, anyway I'm not, and—but this won't get my Dutch; Ich

liebe dich nein, nein, nein —— (*She goes to studying; looks up from her book remarking.*) It's kind of still here! Wonder what the girls are doing? The light isn't very good. (*Rises, moves things around on the table, glances toward the bedroom door inside of which the boots are just visible, starts backward and screams.*) Ow! Ow! There's a man in there! I—I saw his boots. Why, why, what shall I do? It—it—it must be a burglar! He's after Miss Izabelle's jewels. Oh, oh, I'm afraid to run away for fear he'll follow me. (*She keeps staring at the door.*) Let me see! in books they always lock 'em up. I'm going to shut that door if it kills me! (*Makes a rush, slams the door shut, being careful to look the other way. As the door is closed she looks around in horror.*) Oh! The key's on the other side! I don't dare to scream for help. I know he's got a gun, and he'll—he'll shoot me—I've got to call the girls.

(*She makes a hasty exit and reënters, followed by* ELIZABETH WINTER, ANNE DYER, LORAINE BASSETT, NELL *and* JULE, *all more or less excited.*)

ELIZ. A burglar, Kittens?

KIT. (*excitedly*). Yes, I saw him. I was sitting here studying, and I looked up and saw a man's boots.

ANNE. Who shut the door?

KIT. I did. I was going to lock him in, like folks do in books, but the key was on the other side.

NELL. Why don't you telephone to the police?

ELIZ. I thought of that, but you see the 'phone is in that room.

(*Points toward the room where the burglar is supposed to be.*)

NELL. Whew! Say, Jule, why don't you suggest something?

LOR. I know what we've got to do! We've got to bribe him to go away!

ALL. How?

LOR. Why, we can each bring our money and jewelry and —and give them to him.

ANNE. I'd like to know who'd give it to him. Will you go in there, Lor?

LOR. No, no.

ELIZ. I know; we can put it on a chair, and then yell and tell him about it, and he can come out and get it.

ALL. Oh, no! no!

NELL. Well, he'd never come out if we were all here; there'd be too much danger of getting caught afterward.

KIT. But we could go away and leave it for him.

LOR. But what if he should follow us?

ELIZ. He won't; all he wants is our valuables.

KIT. I'm afraid to go to my own room alone. His boots were so queer! And he may have an accomplice.

JULE. Why not scare him off and save our money?

ALL. We can't.

ANNE. I tell you, we'll go around together and collect our things. You tell him, Elizabeth, so he won't follow us.

ELIZ. (*approaching the door and shouting*). Mr. Burglar, Mr. Burglar, please don't come out; we're going to get all our money and jewelry for you, and —— Mercy, girls, he don't answer.

(*Looks around at the girls in consternation.*)

ANNE. Course not; he's not going to give us anything to identify him by afterward.

(*All leave the room and soon return, each carrying a collection of jewelry and purses.*)

ELIZ. We'll pile it up on a chair right by the door. (*The girls approach the chair gingerly and each leaves her contribution upon it. This can be made very laughable if a good deal of acting is done. When everything is on the chair, all retreat to the door and* ELIZ. *cries.*) Here it is, Mr. Burglar. We'll all go away now, and you can come and get it.

JULE. I bet he never comes after it.

NELL. I'm going to peek through the keyhole and see what he looks like.

(*They all rush out; a few minutes later* LOR. *cautiously opens the door.*)

LOR. He—he—won't take it!

(*The girls all peek in and then enter.*)

KIT. It isn't our money he wants. He must be going to murder Miss Izabelle. He's going to hide under her bed and murder her!

ALL. Oh, Kittens, don't.

KIT. He is! He is! It's some jealous suitor of hers.

NELL. Maybe she's dead in there now.

ELIZ. Why, girls, where is Miss Izabelle? Has any one seen her?

ALL. No, no! N-o!

ELIZ. Well, then, something has got to be done!

ANNE. It surely has!

JULE. Let's try scaring! You girls all get something to make a noise with. I'll get my revolver.

NELL. Have you got that with you, Jule? Good, then we're safe, girls! She can shoot like a trooper.

JULE. Hurry, get your things ready!

GIRLS. What?

JULE. Oh, anything to make a racket with. (*All exit; re-enter, one carrying a knife, one a call bell, another a chafing dish pan and spoon, one a stove poker and umbrella, in fact any object that a college girl might have that could make a noise.*) All form a circle around here and when I give the signal, yell and make as much noise as possible. Ready, one, two, three! (*All do as directed, and* JULE *herself shoots off a blank cartridge. There is no sound from within after the hubbub dies down.*) Maybe he's gone. Anyway, I'm going to see. (*Makes a spring toward the door and opens it; as the other girls fall back screaming,* JULE *makes a dive into the room and suddenly reappears holding up the boots, just as* MISS I. *enters at the rear door.*) My uncle's boots! How did they ever get in there?

MISS I. (*coming forward*). Your uncle's boots?

JULE. Why, yes; I brought them down to have you put them in the box to send to the Old Folks' Home. You said there wasn't any pleasure in giving if you never made any sacrifice, and I cared more for these than anything else I ever had; and so I brought them, but I don't see how they got in your room!

KIT. We thought it was a burglar. I saw 'em, and I thought it was a man's feet, and we tried to scare him and bribe him, and Jule she took her gun and went in there, and it was just some boots!

LOR. We were afraid you were murdered.

MISS I. But how did you come to get these boots, Jule? These are Mr. Lestrange's boots, or used to be at least.

JULE. Mr. Lestrange, do you know him? Why, he's my uncle!

MISS I. Your uncle?

JULE. Why, yes; and the boots used to belong to him. I hated awfully to give them up, for he thought so much of them, because he wore them the night he saved Miss Gray's life, but I don't care very much either after she went off and married that horrid millionaire.

MISS I. Millionaire! Millionaire! Marry—I never did!

JULE (*not noticing the slip*). One of her best friends told him about it. Her Aunt Mildred told it herself. Uncle Max felt dreadful! He never saw her afterward—and he has just hated women ever since, says they're fickle and all that they care for is money, and that's why I'm working for my board—there, I've gone and told it.

MISS I. Oh, explain, Jule; I can't understand.

JULE. Well, you see Uncle Max and Professor Eastman got into an argument about girls, and uncle said that all girls cared for was money, and it didn't make any difference what kind of a man was in love with them, if one with a bigger pocket-book came along they'd drop the first one and marry the dollars. And so, to convince him that one girl at least didn't care anything about money, I told him I'd go to a fashionable boarding-school and work for my board, even if Dad was worth half a million; and he let me do it, and he gave me his Hero Boots for a pledge that he'd quit being so set against girls. But I don't think he'll ever care for anybody but Miss Gray. I know he just thinks everything of her yet, for when he gave me the boots he looked so solemn and said so sadly, "Be good to them, little girl, for they mean a whole lot to your uncle yet." I just know he loves her, and I just wish I could see her once—horrid old thing!

MISS I. Are you sure he loves Claire Gray yet?

ELIZ. Why, how strange you look, Miss Izabelle; what is it?

(*The girls begin to fuss about her.*)

MISS I. (*paying no attention to them, but looking fixedly at* JULE). Are you sure he loves Claire Gray yet, Jule?

JULE. Why, yes, Miss Izabelle. Why?

MISS I. (*half rising*). Because I am Claire Gray, and I never married any millionaire, and ——

GIRLS (*in chorus*). You Claire Gray!

(*Look at each other in astonishment.*)

Miss I. Claire Izabelle Gray, and oh, Jule, I thought your uncle did not care for me, so I never told any one what I was going to do after Aunt Mildred and I quarreled and I left there. And now I know she lied, besides trying to force me to marry that man who was old enough to be my father. I just came here where no one knew me and started this girls' school, and some one called me Miss Izabelle, and so I just let my name go as that.

Lor. How interesting!

Kit. Just like a book!

Jule. (*going up to* Miss I. *and putting her arm around her*). And you are the Claire Gray that my uncle loved, and you never married anybody else, and you still care for him? (Miss I. *nods*. Jule *to the girls*.) Come on, girls, come on.

Girls. Where? What for?

Jule. Oh, come quick; we've got to go to the telegraph station; Uncle Max has got to come and get his boots.

(Jule *grabs them and waves them in the air, just as the curtain drops.*)

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